



# Austin/Travis County Health & Human Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**CONTACT: Carole Barasch**  
[Carole.barasch@austintexas.gov](mailto:Carole.barasch@austintexas.gov)  
512-972-6115/512-845-3041

---

**February 4, 2016**

## **1<sup>st</sup> Confirmed Case of Zika Virus**

The Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department (A/TCHHSD) has confirmed the first positive case of Zika virus. The person, a male under the age of 50, contracted the illness while travelling to Colombia. The Zika virus has been declared an emerging public health threat by the World Health Organization. The mosquito that carries Zika is endemic to Central Texas.

In Brazil, Zika virus infections have been identified in several infants born with microcephaly. On January 22, 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) posted interim guidelines for health care providers in the United States caring for pregnant women during a Zika virus outbreak. CDC is recommending that all pregnant women consider postponing travel to areas where Zika virus transmission is ongoing. A link to the guidance can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6502e1.htm>

A/TCHHSD had previously alerted local health care providers and partner organizations to be aware of Zika as they see patients and to ask about travel history. HHSD works with providers to help them assess the need for laboratory testing and facilitate testing from the Centers for Disease Control as needed. Right now, human testing for Zika in Texas can only be done through the Centers for Disease Control. Within weeks, our state lab in Austin is planning to test for the virus.

Mosquito activity is low during our coldest months. Beginning May 1st, the A/TCHHSD mosquito management program begins collecting, testing, and treating mosquito breeding areas throughout Austin and Travis County.

Zika virus is transmitted to persons primarily through the bite of an infected mosquito (*Aedes* species). Dallas County received confirmation this week of a patient who developed Zika virus after sexual contact with an infected traveler. This is the only case of locally transmitted Zika virus infection that has been identified in the continental United States at this time. The CDC will issue guidance soon on prevention of sexual transmission of Zika.

A/TCHHSD continues to encourage people to follow travel precautions and avoid mosquito bites. The most common symptoms of Zika virus disease are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The illness is typically mild and resolves within one week. However, as noted previously, Zika infection in pregnant women may be associated with congenital microcephaly and fetal loss. Guillain-Barre syndrome has also been reported in patients after suspected Zika infection.

Preventative measures residents can take to avoid mosquito bites include draining any water around their property, wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants and using EPA-registered insect repellents.

Additional information can be found at: <http://www.austintexas.gov/article/zika-virus> and at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/>

####